

EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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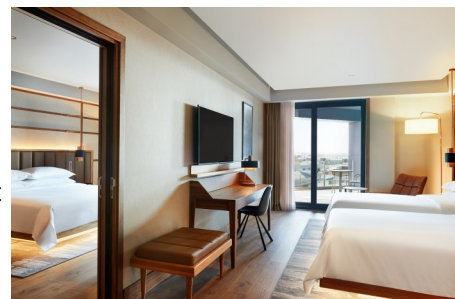
American Business - [Four Points By Sheraton](#)

It takes a lot of courage to open a hotel in a pandemic, yet that is exactly what the people behind Sheraton's Four Points Hotel in Marigona did this July. They threw out all their business forecasts and went for a soft opening, getting to know their neighbors in the residential area of Marigona first. This strategy has paid off, as the Sheraton gets a lot of walk-in business for its spa, Mamo Bar for a coffee, and Vitamin Bar for smoothies. This has also helped its top-notch Italian restaurant, Sospiro.



While designed with the business traveler in mind, most of the Sheraton's business since opening has been weekend getaways and leisure travelers from Germany and Switzerland. Some have become local digital nomads, too – hiring a room and some pampering for a midweek burst of productivity. There is quite a bit for the business traveler, too: a full-service hotel next to a vibrant if small district of shops and restaurants without the distractions of a big city. Business opportunities are close by; major Kosovo businesses such as Gjirafa, Jumbo, and Aldi have headquarters between Pristina and Marigona. With Marriott's Bonvoy program, members earn points and have their preferences on hand worldwide for travel within Marriott chains. This international cooperation makes for a standardized and personal experience for customers.

The hotel's 58 employees keep the restaurants, spa, and 87 rooms running smoothly. All of the employees have previous hospitality experience, while 20% have experience with Marriott/Sheraton chains. Because there is a requirement for previous experience plus the need to look at hospitality as a career instead of a job, it was somewhat difficult to find employees who fit into the corporate ethos.



The U.S. Embassy will be on maximum telework until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Should you have an emergency, please email PristinaACS@state.gov or call +381 338 59 59 30 01.



United States Embassy Pristina, Kosovo American Citizen Services
Contact us if you have any questions at PristinaACS@state.gov.

Four Points by Sheraton continued...

Employees are required to wear masks while in the hotel, and disinfection is taken seriously. No one is allowed to enter the hotel without a mask in this time of COVID, a rarity in Kosovo. Because of their stringent measures, the Sheraton has snagged the business of international sports teams whose management wants to win, instead of sick athletes unable to play.

All employees have health insurance and are given a meal every shift. Those who are required to wear uniforms have free laundry service for them. When employees are working shifts close together, they are given the use of hotel rooms to ensure rest and a minimization of transportation hassles.



In order to maintain consistent and exacting Marriott standards, a Marriott consultancy is in charge of the hotel's operations for the franchise for a minimum of three years.

The government of Kosovo and the US embassy's economic section have engineered such a good business climate for the Sheraton that there are plans to open a Courtyard by Marriott in Pejton by the end of 2023. This second hotel will combine ten stories of hotel rooms with fifteen stories of business offices.

The Sheraton's biggest infrastructure hope is that the road to Marigona widens, with the possibility of access to the highway, in the next couple of years.

Welcome to the neighborhood, Sheraton! We hope to be able to visit you soon.

All photos in this article courtesy of Four Points by Sheraton Pristina.



Watch Your Distance. Wear A Mask. Wash Your Hands.

The simple advice above will help you mitigate the risks of COVID-19, especially crucial in a country with a very high positive test rate (20%). COVID-19 is spread through the air, and the more crowded a place is, the more likely people are to contract COVID-19.

The Embassy has been requiring mask wearing since the beginning of the pandemic. It is now not only an Embassy policy, but a federal regulation. **You will not be allowed on Embassy grounds unless you are properly masked!** We also require distancing when you are in for an appointment. We do this to keep both you and us safe. It's not always popular, but it's the right thing to do.

Section of the Month - Facilities Management

Without the Facilities Management section, the Embassy would fall down around us; facilities makes the Embassy work! A section of about 50 employees, facilities does everything from emptying trash and other custodial duties to



maintaining and repairing the building, and almost everything in and around it. These are the people we call when there is something going wrong in our houses, too.

Facilities includes our fire marshal and Post Occupational Safety and Health officer (POSHO). They keep us safe by ensuring we follow US fire codes and OSHA agency guidelines in both our work environment and residences. They install fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and carbon monoxide detectors in our houses and check them on a regular basis. They make sure the warehouse is kept at a reasonable standard of cleanliness and clutter-free to keep the people who use it safe.

Facilities keeps the Embassy looking sharp both inside and out. The gardeners work year-round on the grounds, shoveling snow and salting ice in the winter and trimming trees and mowing grass in the summer. They plant beautiful flowers and prune shrubs. Whenever there is an event at the Embassy, whether on the grounds or in the building, they do the set up and break down of everything needed for it.

When you check on the Embassy website for the air quality in Pristina, you're a customer of Facilities, too. They maintain the equipment and collect the data, keeping a log of trends. This is part of the greening effort at the Embassy – becoming more sustainable and less expensive through mindful use of energy and materials. The giant pond at the back of the Embassy serves as a receptacle for treated wastewater, heat exchange, and a water reservoir. It is also a little wetlands ecosystem, hosting fish, birds, and plants. Another greening initiative is the plants on roofs, which naturally cool the area under them, extend the life of the rooftop, and improve air quality.

When we have a problem with our houses, Facilities comes and fixes it. If it's something the landlord needs to take care of, they document the problem and negotiate with the landlord to fix it. When this happens, they take care of us by giving us work-arounds or temporary fixes to keep us able to live in the place. This can include electrical work, carpentry, plumbing, wall repair – anything that can go wrong does somewhere, eventually.

Facilities people are awesome, friendly, helpful, competent, and understanding. We appreciate them every day.

US Requires COVID Test For Entry

The United States is requiring negative COVID tests for all. This includes US Citizens. COVID tests may be RT-PCR or antigen tests, and you may be required to show results to the airline before boarding. For information on where to get a COVID test in Kosovo, please visit our COVID page (<https://xk.usembassy.gov/coronavirus/>) on the embassy website.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to come back stronger from stress. It's something that can be augmented, and it is important in this time of pandemic; we need resilience in both good times and bad. This pandemic is a natural disaster, but unlike most it's slow moving and doesn't seem to have an end point. Resilience needs to be used every day and constantly replenished. On the surface, you wouldn't know that Coronavirus is a problem in Kosovo. Sure, there's a curfew, but it's late enough to be able to have a nice dinner before going home. Masking is rare, and 95% of Kosovo's workers are in the offices and business locations, not working from home. Unless a member of your family has it, you can pretend it doesn't exist here. This creates its own stress and mental dissonance, resulting in anxiety and possible depression.

How to deal with it? How to relax and be calmer? There are four pillars of resilience:

Opportunities for service – how can you help others? This gives meaning to your days and lets you engage socially.

Opportunities for connectedness to others – talking, being understanding, working through the situation with other people. This is another way to engage socially and, through sharing, realize you're not alone.

Opportunities for self-reflection – meditate or just sit with a cup of coffee and listen to the environment around you. Be truly alone and organize your thoughts while sorting through your emotions.

Opportunities for self-efficacy and mastery – lose yourself in learning something new or mastering something you were meaning to spend more time on. It gives a sense of accomplishment and meaning, going toward a goal.

In doing these, you may sense more calmness and an ability to get through the day better. If you are feeling more than mildly anxious or depressed, please get professional help. In Kosovo, Linja e jetes gives help in Albanian every day from 6:00 to 02:00 and can be reached at 0800-12345.

Photo courtesy of cdc.gov



Ski Resorts In Kosovo

It's cold. The weather varies from day to day. What to do while staying safe in a pandemic? How about skiing? There are several ski areas in Kosovo.

The granddaddy of ski resorts in Kosovo is [Brezovica](#). It first became a ski resort in 1954 and ski lifts were installed in 1979.

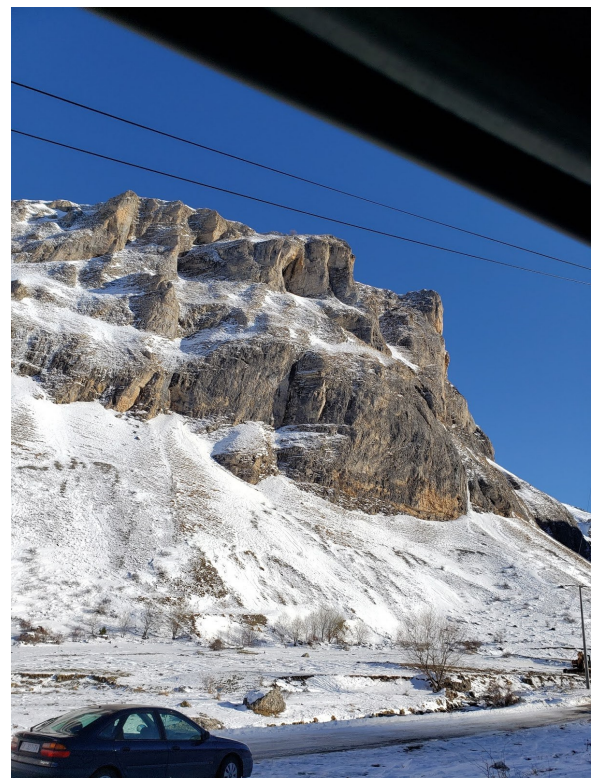


Brezovica

Close by is [Prevala](#) in the Sharr Mountains National Forest. There are several hotels situated near the slopes for long weekends.

Farther north, on the border with Montenegro, is [Boge](#). Boge is at the end of the Rugova Gorge, and has marvelous scenery.

The new kid on the block is in [Brod](#). It has great facilities and a lovely view of Albania from the top of the mountain.



Brod